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Wm. F
(Burden)
AN

IN MEMORIAM.

WILLIAM F. BURDEN,

BORN IN

TROY, RENSSELAER COUNTY, N. Y.,

MARCH 14, 1830.

DIED AT TROY, N. Y.,

DECEMBER 7, 1867.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

William Fletcher Burden, the subject of this brief notice, was the third son of Henry and Helen Burden. He was born in the city of Troy, March 14th, 1830.

The Troy Iron and Nail Works, with which his father had become previously connected, had, at this time, a comparatively limited extent. But his enterprise and genius speedily infused new life into the establishment, till, by a steady and healthful growth, it has reached its present commanding proportions both on the banks of the Wynantskill and the Hudson.

In 1848 Mr. Burden became sole proprietor of the entire concern, which, in 1864, took the title of the Burden Iron Works, the operations of which have since been conducted under the firm of H. Burden & Sons.

Thus early was the way prepared for the exertion of whatever of business capacity the sons of such an energetic parent might possess. It is at this point of time William assumed an active part in managing the interests of the establishment. While subsequently assisted by the two younger brothers who have since proved themselves adequate to the emergencies of their position, they were, at that time, comparatively inexperienced, and with the gradual retirement of the father from his labours, by reason of the growing infirmities of age, it is obvious that the great weight of responsibility rested upon William's shoulders. And nobly did he meet the manifold exigencies of his lot. Foreseeing what would eventually be the claims upon the sons, Mr. Burden spared no pains in securing to them the advantages of a thorough, practical education. William, after enjoying the benefits of less important schools, at length completed a course of instruction in the Troy Polytechnic Institute, which has become so deservedly known

throughout the country. His proficiency in study was, from the commencement, steady and uniform, distinguished less by brilliancy than by a comprehensive and practical character. Whether during the period of his pupilage he had a foresight of the duties which were to devolve upon him in the future or not, it is certain he could not have directed his powers of mind into any channel that would have better fitted him for the labours and responsibilities which awaited him in subsequent life. Calm and thoughtful in temperament, courteous and respectful in demeanor, and without the slightest appearance of assumption, one would not be likely, on a casual acquaintance, to discover the possession of more than ordinary abilities. And it is only after a comprehensive view of the sphere of his labours in its diversified claims, its extended bearings, reaching through different sections of this country and Europe, involving contracts requiring the most accurate intelligence and discrimination, a voluminous corres-

pondence with men of different dispositions, interests, and habits, we can form any thing like a just estimate of his remarkable powers of mind. Under his efficient management the establishment has become one of the largest in the United States; and still further extensions and improvements, projected by him, are being successfully carried out by his surviving brothers. And it is gratifying to know that a kind Providence has so fully provided for the new emergency created by the sudden removal of so important a member of the firm, in the energy and business capacities possessed by his younger surviving brothers. While deeply affected by the great loss they have sustained, yet, qualified by natural endowments and thorough training, they have calmly assumed the additional responsibilities devolved upon them, so that the works, in all their varied operations, and the plans for future extension and improvement, are conducted and carried out as regularly and efficiently as if he,

who was lately the presiding genius, were still present with them.

Notwithstanding Mr. Burden's multiplied cares and labours, his mind never seemed to be perplexed or overtaxed. He was always cool, collected, and cheerful; and evidently possessed a reserved force of intellect which only required still greater exigencies for its development.

In 1856 Mr. Burden was united, in marriage, to Miss Julia A., daughter of the late Hon. Richard P. Hart, of this city. His beautiful dwelling was erected upon the grounds of the paternal estate, within a few yards of the residences of his father, and of one of his sisters — Mrs. E. Proudfit. In 1860 he made a public profession of religion, and, with his wife, was received into the communion of the Second Street Presbyterian church. That profession he was enabled to adorn in a manner which convinced all who knew him that he was a sincere christian.

For several months before Mr. Burden's death occasional symptoms of some inward organic disease made their appearance. These, at first, seemed so slight, and so readily yielded to appropriate treatment, that but little attention was excited by them. But their frequent recurrence, and partaking of a more decided character, began, at length, to awaken serious apprehension. But still no one anticipated so speedy a termination of life. He was confined to his house less than a week, during which time the best medical talent was employed for his relief. But all the efforts of science and skill were baffled; the insidious enemy made sure and rapid progress, until suddenly the noble form and vigorous constitution, unwasted by disease, and with the glow of health yet upon the countenance, lay prostrate in death.

This melancholy event occurred December 7th, 1867, and in the 38th year of his age.

FUNERAL SERVICES.

It is seldom that such a demonstration of respect to the memory of so young a man, and one who occupied no official position in the community, is witnessed as marked the occasion of the interment of Mr. Burden. With no promise of parade to attract the multitude, it is evident that all present were moved simply by their regard for the noble character of the deceased, and their sympathy for the stricken families at Woodside.

In the large concourse of persons assembled were numerous representatives from all classes in the community, and of every profession and occupation. The operatives in the works from which Mr. Burden had just been removed, and from other similar establishments in the city, were present on the occasion and manifested, by looks and actions, the depth and sincerity

of their sorrow. When the body was removed from the dwelling these stalwart artisans and labourers, to the number of nearly two thousand, formed in procession and preceded the slow-moving train of relatives and friends toward the family vault in the Albany Rural Cemetery, where repose the ashes of so many beloved ones "gone before."

The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Dr. Kennedy, assisted by Rev. Messrs. Robinson, Irvin, and Tatlock. During the solemn exercises the choir of the Second Street Presbyterian church sung, with touching impressiveness, Mr. Burden's favourite hymn—

"Jesus, lover of my soul."

Dr. Kennedy delivered, in substance, the following address.

THE ADDRESS.

Brethren and Friends:

Were I to take counsel of my feelings alone, I could not consent to bear an active part in these solemn services. I would, on the contrary, feel constrained to occupy a place in the midst of this afflicted circle, with emotions of sorrow if not as deep yet as real and sincere as those by which any of them are affected, to say nothing of my sympathy with the living whose request comes to me with affecting tenderness. Such was the warmth of my regard for the departed one that I find it difficult to restrain the emotions of my heart. I cherished toward him sentiments of esteem, which, for strength and tenderness, have not been excelled toward any other friend I ever possessed. The interest thus felt in him has not been a matter of sudden growth; it has extended through

many years, and has been strengthened by a variety of providential events both in his history and in my own.

After an acquaintance reaching through early manhood I administered to him the marriage vow; I read to him the covenant engagement when, in the sanctuary of the Most High, he publicly dedicated himself to the service of the God of his fathers; I baptized his children—two of whom God was pleased to remove from earth in early infancy; and I shared in the grief which hallowed the resting-place of his sainted mother. Having enjoyed his friendship and confidence through such varying scenes of joy and sorrow in social, domestic, and religious fellowship, it is no unreasonable assumption in me to think that I knew him well, and that I can comprehend and appreciate the elements which formed his noble character. Yet I am aware that it is difficult to give expression to the estimate I have formed of him for the reason that I have had neither time nor opportunity to

embody my ideas in appropriate language. I refer, therefore, only to a few obvious features which it were improper to overlook. In doing this I am assured that I can not be suspected of dealing in any thing like fulsome eulogium. Were my taste inclined to excessive praise, the well-known modesty of my departed friend would repress its indulgence on this occasion.

I may say, then, that we are called, this day, to attend the obsequies of a man of decided and attractive qualities. In physical development Mr. Burden presented a form at once compact, symmetrical and manly, which rendered his movements singularly graceful, elastic, and dignified. With a voice musical and ringing in its tones; with a face regular and yet striking; an eye soft and radiant, his countenance always gave immediate and unmistakable expression to the inward workings of his mind, so that when you looked at him and heard him speak you instinctively felt that you possessed the true index to his soul. Endowed, by nature, with an in-

tellect of great strength and activity, he was eminently fitted to engage in any pursuit in life to which his attention might be directed. But, restricted by circumstances and education to the prosecution of the enterprises which the inventive genius and the indomitable energy of his venerable father had commenced and conducted, he early evinced a ready appreciation of its importance, and a comprehensive knowledge of the mechanical and commercial relations which it involved. Progressively advancing in mental culture and discipline, the promise of his youth was fully realized when, in young manhood, he became the ruling spirit in the complicated and extended establishment of the Troy Iron Works. Under his supervision, with hundreds of labourers and employes to be directed, and various departments to be supervised, with contracts to be made, and orders to be filled involving receipts and expenditures of enormous pecuniary proportions, he was always calm and collected, conscious that he was master of the position

which he occupied. No one could enter into conversation with him without being speedily aware of the wonderful capacity of his mind, equally fitted to grasp the grand whole of the vast establishment, or to enter into the minutest details of its varied and complex workings. Though the great achievements of his father left him little to accomplish in the sphere of original invention, yet it is well understood that a large share of the same executive genius marked the intellect of the son. I remember when, on one occasion, having passed with him through a part of the works then recently erected, I observed that doubtless several changes had been made in carrying out the minuter details of the general plan, he replied, that so completely had the whole building been arranged in his mind that "not a nail had been driven in a place not originally designed for it."

But notwithstanding the numerous and engrossing interests involved in his business pursuits, extending not only through the different

States of the Union, but reaching also to several countries in Europe, Mr. Burden allowed nothing to interfere with his domestic or social relations. Blest with a congenial companion, and a group of interesting children, his home was the place of hallowed retirement, within the sacred enclosure of which the cares and anxieties of the external world were not allowed to intrude. When he crossed the threshold of his beautiful dwelling his heart became at once open to the endearments of family, and the kindly influences of friendship. With an exuberance of genuine social feelings there was ever a genial smile upon his countenance, and a cordiality of tone in his voice which gave the fullest assurance that those whom he received as companions had a warm place in his heart. While he made no protestations of special regard his demeanor was so frank and winning that the comparative stranger speedily felt at ease in his presence, and at home in his society. His inward, native refinement, affecting the outer life, furnished a happy illus-

tration of the proverb that "a true gentleman in deportment is always a true gentleman at heart."

Though surrounded by the appliances of wealth, and occupying a high position in society, Mr. Burden seemed to be proof against the injurious influences which such circumstances so frequently engender. The spirit of pride neither warped his intellect nor indurated his heart. The voice of flattery did not beguile his judgment nor cheat into the indulgence of a weak and offensive vanity. The conscious possession of power did not lead to its improper exercise. While his opinions were frankly expressed, and, if need be, manfully defended, his manner was always modest and respectful. He shrunk from every thing that bore the semblance of arrogance and dictation. He readily deferred to the counsels of others, and accepted or rejected them according as to his own honest convictions they appeared to be valuable or otherwise. This modest and unambitious spirit made him satisfied with

the duties and prerogatives of his own appropriate sphere of activity, and led him to decline proffered positions of civil honour and trust. He had no taste for political conflicts, no relish for the imaginary preferments and perplexities of office. His retiring disposition cherished no ambition beyond a faithful discharge of the obligations devolving upon him in the allotment which Providence had manifestly assigned to him.

Mr. Burden was a man of marked *integrity of character*. This claim on his behalf, I am fully persuaded, no one will presume to question. Mere worldly expediency, or the consideration of what would, on the whole, promote a selfish interest, had no place in his code of morals. He seemed to possess an intuitive perception of what was upright in principle and conduct, and a conscious appreciation of its claims and obligations. In this respect it is safe to say of him, and it is saying much of any man involved in so many complications of business life, that the

severest, and even the most uncharitable scrutiny, has never ventured to breathe the slightest suspicion in regard to his personal integrity. The universal verdict is, that he lived and died an HONEST MAN.

The foregoing elements of character are in beautiful harmony with the last which the occasion will allow me to mention—Mr. Burden was a *sincere and consistent christian.* This, after all, in the sober judgment of every thinking man, is the most important attribute which can adorn any human character. Every other excellence takes its real dimensions and gathers its brightest lustre from this. Other qualities may be attractive and useful within the sphere of the present life, but when estimated on the verge of the grave, and in view of the destinies of the eternal future, they are of little value except as ennobled and sanctified by the spirit of true religion. This spirit, we believe, animated the heart and governed the life of our departed friend. I well remember the time when, as an earnest, inquir-

ing soul, he first consulted me, as his pastor, in regard to his spiritual interests. It was no transient emotion that affected him. It was deep and solemn consideration, pervading and exercising all the powers of his mental and moral nature. He saw and felt himself to be a sinner, and yearned for pardon and reconciliation. He spent much time in prayer and meditation, till, at length, he was led, by the Divine Spirit, to bow at the cross, where he found the peace for which he had earnestly sought, and was enabled to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. From this time onward a predominance of religious principle became manifest in all his relations. The manly virtues previously possessed now became more apparent, vigorous and demonstrative, so that his new character henceforth presented a harmonious combination of attractive qualities — the joint endowment of nature and of grace.

In the discharge of his daily duties he seemed to cherish a practical recognition of Divine Providence in all the affairs of life. And so

constant and abiding was this conviction that, in regard to all contingent purposes and events, "*God willing*" became an habitual and reverent expression upon his lips. He was a devoted student of the Bible, and unhesitatingly submitted his understanding and conscience to the letter and spirit of its heavenly teachings, with no attempt to dilute its doctrines or weaken its authority by the frigid speculations of human philosophy. How vividly can I recall, at this moment, the many expressions of satisfaction I have received from him as, after some cardinal truth of the christian system had been unfolded in the pulpit, he bore hearty testimony to the spiritual benefit he had received. It was the divine word, contemplated in its just proportions and simplicity, which furnished the aliment by which his soul was nourished and strengthened.

I will not dwell on the manner in which grace quickened and enlarged the benevolent spirit of our beloved brother. Suffice it to say

that when he gave himself to God he evidently included in the surrender all that he possessed. He felt that he was no longer his own. Accordingly he contributed bountifully of his substance to the promotion of every enterprise which commended itself to his judgment. Living in the midst of a community where appeals to the charitable heart can not be infrequent, multitudes can bear testimony to the constancy and liberality of his benefactions. Among his last efforts to do good was the project which he formed, with the concurrence and co-operation of all the members of the family, of erecting a new house of worship in this neighborhood. This purpose did not, indeed, originate with him. It had been earnestly cherished by his mother long before her departure to her heavenly home, and as cordially acquiesced in by his surviving father. But this beloved son had always felt a measure of personal responsibility in relation to it. And true to the memory of one, and the purpose of both of his parents, he only

waited the appropriate time for the execution of the noble design. On his dying bed he seemed to derive peculiar pleasure in reviewing the plans and drawings of the edifice, and suggesting such changes as might render it better adapted to the purpose of a sanctuary of the living God. And though, by a mysterious Providence, he was not permitted to see the accomplishment of the enterprise which was so dear to his heart, yet the work will be completed in due time; and on yonder eminence that structure will stand, with its spire pointing significantly toward heaven, a beautiful and appropriate monument to the Memory of William Fletcher Burden.

And what now remains but that we gather appropriate lessons from the event which has thus called us to this house of mourning. Do we not, as we stand beside these sacred remains, read the law of our own mortality? God's providence is thus present, even to the outward vision, giving sanction to the decree — "Thou

shalt surely die." This doom is certainly before us all — the healthiest and the strongest among us. Who, looking at Mr. Burden a few months since, would have imagined that he should so soon become a victim to the great Destroyer! Take heed, my friends, for "in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Let us seek to be, through grace, prepared for the event, come when it may. Then death will be gain. In this condition of preparation the departed one has passed within the vail. The faithful husband, the loving father, the dutiful son, the affectionate brother, the sincere christian, now stands a ransomed spirit before the throne of God and the Lamb.

Let us strive to become sharers in the same glorious destiny.

IN MEMORIAM.

W. F. B.

He of the manly frame,
And mind of generous mould,
Whom men as brother claim,
Lies still and cold.

That hand, whose genial clasp
A kindly heart impelled,
Is firm in death's stern grasp
Forever held.

That voice which, whether heard
In earnest or in play,
All kindly feelings stirred,
Is breathed away.

Those eyes of earnest blue,
  Which heaven's own color bore—
So deep, and bright, and true—
  Shall ope no more.

His was that wisest skill
  That sees in nature's law
A higher, mightier will
  Than fate e'er saw.

Yet he, with hand and brain
  Nature's own secrets sought,
And boldly strove to gain
  The ends of thought.

The iron hid in earth,
  In grime and blackness bound,
Knew not its latent worth—
  A king uncrowned.

His hand the crownless drew
  From darkness into light,
And purified, it knew
  Its boundless might:

Knew, yet that might untried
A shapeless clod concealed
Till mind became its guide
And form revealed—

Form quickened by the breath
Of fire and wise design,
That brought the victor-wreath
For work benign.

He bore an honored name
And honored it as well;
His was a great heart's fame—
No empty shell.

The men of stalwart make,
The men of iron frame,
Who loved him for his sake,
His own dear name,

Stood o'er him, coffined, dead,
Looked in the quiet face,
Dumb in death's presence dread,
Then walked apace.

A hundred score they came
  And gazed, with sorrow moved,
On all that earth could claim
  Of him they loved.

Then rose the song of praise
  To Christ who loves the soul—
Who leads us through this maze
  To reach the goal.

The fitly spoken word
  Flowed gently on the air,
And tenderly was heard
  The voice of prayer.

Out from his home so bright,
  Out through the open door,
Into the Winter light,
  His form they bore.

Adown the winding road,
  By furnace, forge and mill,
In column vast they trode,
  And he so still.

So through the city's ways
They went, with solemn pace,
On that most sad of days,
With saddest face.

Then left they him at rest,
In love, and hope, and trust—
A soul immortal, blest,
And dust to dust.

Troy, *December 10, 1867.*